



## National Rivers and Streams Assessment: A Fact Sheet for Communities

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), states, and tribes are conducting a nationwide survey of the condition of the nation's rivers and streams. The survey will help citizens and governments measure the health of our waters, take actions to prevent pollution, and evaluate the effectiveness of protection and restoration efforts.

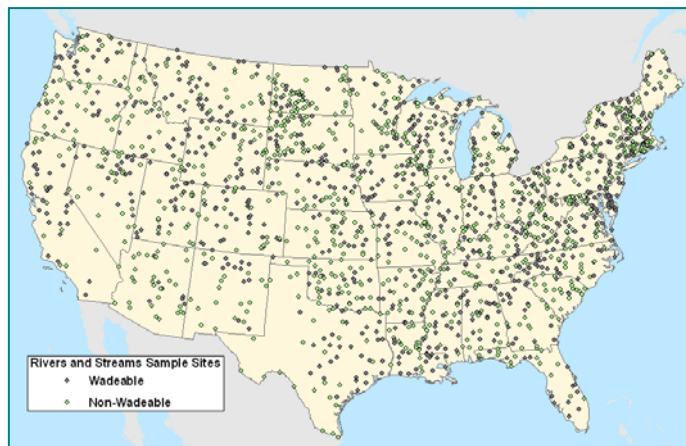
Designed to estimate the percentage of rivers and streams that are in good, fair, or poor condition, the survey will serve as a scientific report card on America's flowing waters. It will examine ecological, water quality, and recreational indicators, and assess how widespread key stressors (such as nutrients, fish tissue contaminants, and bacteria) are across the country.

The survey is a collaborative effort that involves dozens of state environmental and natural resource agencies, federal agencies, universities and other organizations. In many states, state water quality staff will conduct the water quality sampling and habitat assessments. In others, field work will be conducted by staff under contract to EPA.

### How were the sites selected?

A total of 1,800 sample sites were selected to represent the condition of

rivers and streams across the lower 48 states. Of these, half are large streams and rivers, and half are "wadeable" streams. Sites were selected randomly using a statistical survey design to represent the population of rivers and streams in their ecological region - the geographic area in which climate, ecological features, and plant and animal communities are similar.



Distribution of river and stream survey sites

### What about my local river or stream?

*If your local waterbody is being sampled for this survey, it was selected randomly from the population of rivers and streams in your part of the country. It was not selected because it exhibits any particular problem or water quality condition, or because it was recommended for sampling by an agency or organization. When the final report on the National Rivers and Streams*

Assessment is written, data from your local waterbody will contribute to the regional and national picture of the condition of the nation's flowing waters.

*If your local river or stream is not being sampled for this survey, it was not omitted for any particular reason, but rather because it was not randomly selected or did not fit into the target population of flowing waters.*

Many volunteer water monitoring groups have years of sampling data for rivers and streams, data vital to local water quality management activities. This survey will provide a regional and national - and in some cases, statewide - assessment. It will also allow those with sampling data for their local waters to compare the condition of their river or stream to the range of flowing waters in their region or state.

### What will researchers measure?

Field crews will be taking many measurements at each selected site. They will be using consistent procedures at all sites so that results can be compared across the country. They will be measuring such things as:

- Temperature, dissolved oxygen, nutrients, pH, and more;
- Condition of the habitat along the river or stream banks;
- Algae and free floating plants;
- Benthic macroinvertebrates -

small animals such as insects, snails, and crayfish that are a source of food for fish;

- Bacteria -- indicators of fecal contamination from animals or humans; and
- Contaminants in fish tissue.

Data for individual waters will be made available to the public via a national database as part of the final national report on the condition of our rivers and streams.



### What happens next?

Sampling will be conducted during the summer of 2008 and 2009. EPA intends to issue a report on the findings in 2011. Between the time sites are sampled and the national report is published, samples will be analyzed in the lab, the data will be entered into a database and analyzed, and a draft report will be written and reviewed. The public will have the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report.

### Where can I find out more?

For more information visit:  
[www.epa.gov/owow/riverssurvey/](http://www.epa.gov/owow/riverssurvey/)  
or email us at:  
[riverssurvey@epa.gov](mailto:riverssurvey@epa.gov).

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